

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Osaka! We pray that all of you are well, and that you had a blessed Christmas and are ready for 2003. We have settled in for the long haul here in Osaka, and we fully expect to be ministering here for the next twenty years unless the Lord has other plans for us. The task before us is huge, and we do not expect to ever run out of fruitful things to do here.

We have had one major surprise in that we originally thought that we would be spending most of this winter in prayerful preparation for the cell church plant that will begin next May, but the Lord apparently decided that we were taking things too easy. When the pastor of the nearby Osaka International Church (OIC) resigned suddenly, the church council asked Dan if he could fill in, and, after praying about it and getting counsel from some key mentors, Dan agreed to accept the responsibility. So, Dan is now officially the part-time, interim pastor for an international congregation of about one hundred members,



Dan in the pulpit at OIC

sharing the Good News from the pulpit every Sunday and keeping limited counseling hours at the church office. While we do not expect this to delay the start of the cell church plant, it is definitely making us busier than expected. Since the church is in serious financial difficulties it is likely that it will be a year or

more before OIC is able to call a full-time pastor.

This commitment has slowed down our preparations for the new church plant, but we are still making good progress. We have gotten to know several Japanese pastors through visiting church events and prayer groups, and are learning more about this huge city every day. We have a name for the new church (see back) and are researching possible meeting places and office spaces. It is also likely that we will get a lot of assistance for the church plant from the congregation at OIC, evidence of how the Lord orchestrates blessings from a difficult situation. We do hope that you enjoy reading this prayer letter. God bless you!

In Jesus' love,

Dan and Karen

Rainbow Club Christmas Party

Dan traveled back to Hiroshima to see the church there and to host the Rainbow Club Christmas party. It was great to see Pastor Nagashima and the rest of the church after being gone, and the party was also a big success. Dan made balloon hats for all of the kids and Pastor Nagashima told the Christmas story.

In addition to providing an ongoing witness of Christ's love to the children, Rainbow Club has also turned out to be a great way to share the gospel with young mothers. As we continue to support the Hiroshima Rainbow Club with monthly mailings of gospel comic books and seasonal parties, we are praying about getting Rainbow Club started here in Osaka.

Home Worship Visit

Twice a month, Pastor Watahara (on the right in the photo) leads these ladies in a home Bible study that is developing into a worship group. Dan

visited them one day and was impressed by Pastor Watahara's engaging style and his ability to communicate the gospel in fresh ways to his audience. We always feel that we have much to learn from the Japanese pastors, and we try to spend



time with them whenever we can. They, on the other hand, seem to have a great appreciation for the ability of missionaries to develop ministry contacts among unchurched people.

"Osaka Direct" Email Updates

By popular request, since last September we have been sending out a monthly email update called *Osaka Direct*. If you are not getting *Osaka Direct* and want to, please email us at ellrick@proverbs2525.org. You can also read old issues of *Osaka Direct* on the web at www.proverbs2525.org.

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